

# Biography of a World Champion

**Marcus Goodarzi was 21 years old when he came to Denmark in 1988. Since then he has fought against the very Danish principle of keeping to the common middle ground and made a name for himself resulting in a résumé longer and more diversified than most other people's.**

By Emil Maischnack Jensen  
Photo: Lars Johannesen

**SNEKKERSTEN:** Off-hand, the picturesque half-timbered thatched-roof cottage on the scenic coastal road Strandvejen looks like any other house here in the well-to-do part of Snekkersten. I'm meeting Marcus Goodarzi but at first not sure I'm at the right house until I notice the small first-floor window—the window sill is groaning with trophies and medals, and immediately I know I'm at the right house.

The trophies belong to Marcus's son Lucas Goodarzi, it turns out, but might as well have belonged to Marcus himself—because he has an even more impressive résumé than his son, who has just been named Talent of the Year by the local government in Helsingør Municipality. They both practice karate, and Mar-

cus Goodarzi is, among other things, defending World Champion in the 40-to-45 year age group, several times Danish Champion, and national coach of one of the Danish national teams in karate. In addition to this he runs three karate schools in Snekkersten and Copenhagen, works as a physiotherapist in Amager south of Copenhagen, has his own coaching business in Snekkersten, does guest speaking, is a lecturer at the Department of Exercise and Sport Sciences at the University of Copenhagen, and is married with two children of 4 and 12 years of age, respectively.

## In Denmark at 21

Marcus Goodarzi is a busy man—and has been ever since he arrived in Denmark at 21, having left the Iranian regime.

"In Iran I had a very narrow framework within which to evolve because of the political regime, so I came to Denmark to be able to work more freely with my karate," he tells me after inviting me in for coffee in his office located in one wing of the house.

Here he works mostly with coaching and mental training for top athletes and business executives.

It would be awhile,



Marcus Goodarzi both lives and works in the thatched cottage on Strandvejen in Snekkersten

however, before the young Iranian was able to practice karate the way he wanted in Denmark.

"Very quickly I ran into the very Danish principle of 'Just who do you think you are?' I was from Iran—one of the biggest karate nations in the world—and there I was among the best, but when I came to Denmark my black belt wasn't acknowledged, and instead I was required to start over from the white belt," he says.

Furthermore, he was forced to realize that whereas he could easily live off karate in Iran, it was unheard of to make money off the sport in Denmark.

"I'd thought I'd be acknowledged as one of the best competitors in the country without a

hitch, and so be able to make a living off of it, but I soon got wiser," he says.

## Accredited practitioner

Instead, an education as a physiotherapist became the solution to making a living—and by a happy coincidence also the solution to being accredited as a karate black belt.

"One of my physiotherapy teachers was also a national coach and she took care of having what I'd achieved in Iran recognized, so that after college I could start competing at top level," he says.

After that came National Championships one after another and Marcus Goodarzi could finally be-

gin to realize the dreams that made him come to Denmark in the first place.

"Already at 15 or 16 back in Iran I knew that I would leave and practice my sport abroad. Every-

thing else, like coaching the national team or becoming a lecturer at the University of Copenhagen, is just icing on the cake," he concludes.

## MARCUS GOODARZI

Born August 30, 1967 in Teheran, Iran.

### Selected degrees:

2007–2009 NLP coaching degree/training, NLP Huset, Denmark  
2003–2005 Master of Sports, Exercise and Welfare, Dept. of Exercise and Sport Sciences, University of Copenhagen  
1994–1997 Physiotherapist, Copenhagen, Denmark

Has been doing/practicing karate since the age of 12

Founder of the Goodarzi Karate Academy in Snekkersten and in Osterbro, Copenhagen, and co-founder of Copenhagen Budo Academy in Nørrebro  
Since 2003 Coach for the SKIF national karate team

### Selected karate accomplishments:

1985 Bronze medal, Club Championships, Teheran, Iran  
1990 Gold medal, Liven Cup, Team Kumite, Denmark  
1992 Gold medal, Liven Cup, Open Category  
1998–1999 Best Fighter, SKIF, Denmark  
1998–2002 Gold medal, Team Championships, SKIF, Denmark  
1999 Best Fighter, Danish Karate Federation  
2000 Gold medal, Open Class, National Individual Championships, Denmark  
2001 Gold medal, +80 kilos, National Individual Championships, Denmark & Bronze medal, Open Class  
2002–2004 Gold medal, Team Championships, Denmark  
2008 Bronze medal, Team Championships, Masters European Championships, SKIF Italy  
2009 Double gold medals, Masters World Championships, SKIF Athens, Greece  
2010 Gold medal, International SKIF Tournament, Italy



The 2009 World Championship trophy is the only one of the many medals and trophies not put away

## "You have to be able to change gears."

**Maintaining a 100 per cent focus all the time is impossible—and trying results in stress, says Marcus Goodarzi. The trick is to be able to shift between levels of focus, enabling extra efficiency**

By Emil Maischnack Jensen

**SNEKKERSTEN:** For a top athlete to be able to perform the person needs first to be able to focus, but on the other hand also

to be able to relax enough that the performance is in no way strained. And according to Marcus Goodarzi, the same thing goes for perfectly ordinary people performing a task.

"Many people have on-ly two levels of focus—either they work hard because society has taught them to or else they're completely relaxed. The problem is that maintaining a total focus for hours

on end is unhealthy; it's what causes stress. The trick is to learn multiple levels on which to operate, allowing you to perform certain tasks with complete focus and others with a broader focus," says the former top athlete who now works with mental coaching and is manager of one of the Danish national karate teams, among other things.

"I work a lot with men-

tal training with my karate students. It's all about being able to perform when you need to, and yet not stressing about how you're doing in the time leading up to the performance," he says.

The method that Marcus Goodarzi utilizes originated in the US and goes by the name 'Open Focus' and according to Marcus Goodarzi himself, he is the only one in Denmark who

currently practices it.

"It's a method that works for both athletes and corporate life and that's who I mainly work with, but this method has proven extremely useful also as a cure through relieving stress symptoms and chronic pain in people—because that's also about having the wrong kind of focus," he says.

When coaching or lecturing Marcus Goodarzi

does not limit himself to the American principles, however.

"I also use my own life experience—and not least the Japanese wisdom I've learned through karate," he adds.

He plans on working as a mental coach to professional athletes and international corporations in the future.

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